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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 012081

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2020

TAGS: [CN](#) [IN](#) [NP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: A/S BLAKE'S MEETING WITH NORWEGIAN SPECIAL ENVOY
TO THE NEPAL PEACE PROCESS AMBASSADOR TORENG

Classified By: ROBLAKE

11. (C) SUMMARY: Norway's Special Envoy to the Nepal peace process, Ambassador Tore Toreng, met with Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) Robert Blake on February 3 to discuss his mission and prospects for coordination among members of the international community. Toreng emphasized the need for contingency planning among like-minded countries in the event that the Constituent Assembly fails to meet the May 28 deadline to draft the constitution. Blake and Toreng agreed on the need to offer the Maoists a way forward, as well as the importance of beginning discussions within the international community on appropriate benchmarks for UNMIN's departure. Blake instructed SCA/INSB to work with Embassy Kathmandu on a draft that could be shared with Norway, the UN and others. END SUMMARY.

Toreng Calls for Coordination and Contingency Planning

12. (C) In a February 3 meeting with SCA Assistant Secretary Blake, Ambassador Tore Toreng, Norway's Special Envoy to the Nepal peace process, stressed the need for international coordination on Nepal, including the preparation of contingency plans in the event that the peace process is not completed on schedule. (As an example, Toreng raised the hypothetical scenario of the Government of Nepal (GON) resorting to presidential rule with the support of the Nepal Army, if the constitution is not completed by the May 28 deadline.) Noting that he perceives a new commitment among the main political leaders in Nepal, Toreng suggested that the drafting process had recently progressed far enough that a stripped-down version of the constitution might be finished by the May 28 deadline, with some key issues, such as the federal structure of the state, left for further discussion.

13. (C) Toreng noted that Norwegian Minister of the Environment and International Development Erik Solheim wants to work with like-minded countries to play a supportive role in the peace process without taking over the agenda. According to Toreng, Solheim, who plans to visit Kathmandu on March 22, wants to adopt in Nepal the approach he used in Sri Lanka of regular high-level visits to Nepal to maintain momentum in the peace process and strengthen the international community's "disaster preparedness" and contingency planning in the event progress falters. Blake told Toreng that he will stop in Nepal on his way to the SAARC summit in late April, and agreed that periodic

telephone consultations among key headquarters officials regarding Nepal is a good idea. Blake stressed the importance of keeping the United Nations involved in the peace process, as the Nepalis listen to the UN headquarters in particular, and noted that the upcoming visit by Under Secretary for Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe would be helpful in that regard.

14. (C) Toreng further emphasized that there is a need for contingency planning regarding the closure of UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). Toreng commented that the UN's Tamrat Samuel envisions 5,000 - 6,000 Maoist combatants being integrated into the security forces. If that benchmark is reached, Toreng suggested, then that could be the signal that UNMIN is complete. Toreng proposed that the U.S. and like-minded countries begin to coordinate on framing clear benchmarks for the closure of UNMIN. A/S Blake agreed with Toreng's call for contingency planning regarding UNMIN and instructed SCA/INSB to work with Post on this issue.

Working with India and China

15. (C) Toreng reported that Solheim and others see a change in political climate in New Delhi regarding Nepal, which may allow for better coordination with India on the peace

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process. A key issue, he noted, is how to get India "playing the same tune" as the rest of the international community on Nepal. Toreng emphasized that the Maoists need assurances - enshrined in the constitution - before they will be willing to empty the cantonments completely. By offering messages of support, the international community can bolster those Nepali political actors including moderates in the Maoists who are working for consensus, he noted. Toreng said that he had recently met with the Indian Ambassador to Nepal in Kathmandu, and with the Indian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and found them both supportive of a common approach to the Nepal peace process. He reported that he plans to travel to New Delhi the week of February 8 for consultations with National Security Advisor Shiv Shankar Menon, who, Toreng commented, seems cooperative on Nepal.

16. (C) A/S Blake agreed with Toreng's assessment of progress in Nepal's peace process in the last month or two. Blake emphasized that the Indians welcome our coordinating with them - but want it done quietly. He noted that the Indian views of Nepal are shaped in part by having to keep one eye on China; for example, Indian officials have expressed concerns to us over Maoist leader Prachanda's recent trips to China. Toreng reported that he had recently spoken with the Chinese Permanent Representative to the United Nations, and observed that the Chinese, while still circumspect in their public pronouncements on Nepali politics, have recently begun to issue statements in support of the peace process. A/S Blake assured Toreng that he plans to raise the Nepal peace process with Chinese officials during his planned visit to Beijing in March.

Showing the Maoists a Way Forward

17. (C) Toreng attributed recent progress to a shift in power toward the democratic faction of the Maoist party. He opined that the 2006 "understanding" between G.P. Koirala and Prachanda has probably played a positive role, as well, and that the recent momentum in the peace process is rooted in these two figures' motivation to achieve results. The ailing G.P. Koirala sees the completion of Nepal's peace process as his legacy, Toreng stated, and Prachanda needs to deliver results in order to keep the Maoist party from fracturing. The need to show progress in advance of the United Nations discussion on UNMIN, Toreng added, may have also played a

role in the recent progress. He cautioned, however, that some forces in Nepal do not want a successful outcome to the peace process. In particular, he pointed to splits within the Maoist party, noting rumors that Prachanda was concerned that hardliners among the Maoists may target him for assassination. Toreng emphasized the need for the international community to support work toward consensus in order to bolster more moderate forces, such as Prachanda.

18. (C) Blake emphasized that the U.S. is trying to show the Maoists a way forward, adding that we have offered them a clear path - including a set of written benchmarks - for removal from our terrorism lists. Toreng agreed that the international community should clearly articulate its concerns and expectations, especially regarding the Young Communist League (YCL), to the Maoists. He noted that the Norwegians have a long history of contact with the Maoists and can thus communicate clearly and directly with the Maoist leadership. Toreng added that Norway had previously succeeded in working with youth groups to sign a "common platform", and that there were opportunities - through similar efforts - to move the YCL toward a more positive role.

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